

The Home Services Follow-Up Clock

We went through **1,500 leads** and **17,350 text messages** to find out one thing: what actually makes a homeowner text back.

The book is roofing. Nothing that moved the number was about roofs. It was emoji, offer words, length, and the hour you pressed send, which is the same in every trade that texts a homeowner. All of it is checkable against your own CRM this afternoon.

3.5 min

median time to reply, when they reply

55%

of leads who go quiet eventually come back

4×

plain text beats promotional text

Drawn from our own book, not an industry survey. Read the trade word as yours.

CHAPTER ONE

The four words that book a job

Here is a real exchange from our book. Watch the last thing the

contractor says. Nothing about it is specific to a trade.

The diagram shows a chat conversation within a light blue rounded rectangle. The messages are as follows:

- Contractor (dark blue bubble): "I have tomorrow at 10 AM, or 2 PM. What time works for you?"
- Customer (light blue bubble): "Just me. 11am would be better."
- Customer (light blue bubble): "Nevermind, I have to take my mom to a Dr's appointment tomorrow."
- Contractor (dark blue bubble): "How about on Wednesday?"
- Customer (light blue bubble): "Wednesday @ 11am works"

She talked herself out of the appointment. The reply is **four words and a new day**. No apology. No "no problem, just let me know what works for you." No re-pitch. A slot.

The same shape turns up again and again once you start looking for it:

The diagram shows a chat conversation within a light blue rounded rectangle. The messages are as follows:

- Contractor (dark blue bubble): "When are you available for us to stop by?"
- Customer (light blue bubble): "Afternoon"
- Contractor (dark blue bubble): "How about at 2 pm?"
- Customer (light blue bubble): "Sounds good"

1 Get them talking about timing.

An open question works. So does naming a couple of times, which is what happens above. Either one is fishing for the same thing: their real constraint.

2 Let them name the obstacle.

Afternoon. Next week. My mom's appointment. This is the useful part, and most people talk over it.

3

Put a concrete time back on the table.

A day, or a day and an hour. Anything except "let me know what works for you", which hands the work back to the person who has just finished telling you they are busy.

How hard is this one? Softer than the rest, and you should know that.

Of the 533 recovery messages that named a single time, 36.8% got a reply. The 64 that named two got 48.4%. That gap is suggestive and it does not clear our significance bar, so we are not going to hand you a rule about one option versus two. Propose a time. Then test the rest in your own CRM.

CHAPTER TWO

The follow-up you were about to skip

Everyone knows the first follow-up works best. That is true, and it is the wrong thing to act on.

Each chase pulls a smaller share than the last. But the leads you recover keep stacking, and the cost of getting one keeps falling:

IF YOU STOP AFTER...	LEADS RECOVERED	COST PER RESPONSE
1 follow-up	21.1%	\$237
3 follow-ups	35.3%	\$142
6 follow-ups	41.8%	\$119
8 follow-ups	45.5%	\$110

1,092 leads who went quiet and were then chased. Cost per response assumes a \$50 cost per lead, substitute your own.

Chasing to eight instead of one cuts your cost per response by more than half. The table stops at eight because that is where our own sending stops. Counting every chase we ever sent, **55.3% of leads who went quiet came back** — the last ten points arrived after the eighth message.

The part that surprised us

Of the 543 leads still being chased at the eighth message, **3.7% answered it** — the same share the fifth message pulled from its own pool. That is a different measure from the table above, which counts against every lead you started with. Read this one as: the well does not run dry. It flattens out and stays there.

A text costs about a cent. So the eighth chase bought another 20 responses for roughly five dollars of sending, against leads you had already paid thousands to acquire.

A falling response rate is only a reason to stop if the next message is expensive. It isn't. Anything above zero beats writing off a lead you have already paid for.

CHAPTER THREE

What to take out of the text

We split every message by one feature at a time. Nearly every instinct

that feels like marketing makes the number worse.

DO THIS	RATE	NOT THIS	RATE
No emoji	18.4%	Any emoji	3.5%
No offer words	23.8%	"free / discount / \$ / expiring"	5.7%
61 to 100 characters	23.6%	Over 260 characters	9.1%
One or two lines	18.2%	Multi-line block	11.3%
Asks a question	18.4%	No question at all	13.2%

Here a text counts as answered if the homeowner replied before we sent again, so these are per-message rates on all 17,350 outbound texts. The clock in chapter four uses a different measure, see the note at the end.

The emoji tax is the one nobody believes. Texts carrying an emoji got answered 3.5% of the time, against 18.4% for texts without — a fivefold gap across 17,350 messages. A house emoji and an exclamation mark reads as a blast, and people delete blasts.

Openers that actually earned a conversation

Every one of these is a plain question. Not one leads with an offer. They are quoted as sent, so swap the trade word for yours: furnace, panel, water heater, windows.

Are you still looking for help with your roof?

Would a quick phone call work better for you to talk about your roof?

I saw your request for a roof estimate. When would be a good time for us to stop by?

And the ones that got ignored

🏠 Peace of mind for your home! 🏠 Stop worrying about your roof getting old... You qualify for...

🏠🏠🏠 So about your roof project. If you're like most people, it's a "back of your mind" sort of problem...

1.7% and 2.5%. Both sent hundreds of times. Rewrite these for your own trade and they still fail, because the emoji and the offer are what killed them.

CHAPTER FOUR

The clock

Reply rate by day and time, in the homeowner's local time. Pin this up.

	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
6-9am	15%	14%	11%	18%	18%	14%	26%°
9am-1pm	25%	22%	16%	15%	46%	23%	22%
1-6pm	14%	15%	11%	15%	36%	14%	22%
6-9pm	26%°	31%°	38%°	29%	37%	15%	39%°

Fewer replies  More

· Cells marked ° had fewer than 200 texts, treat them as a hint rather than a number.

Friday 9am to 1pm returns 46%. Wednesday 1pm to 6pm returns 11%.

Nearly the same number of texts went out in each. Four times the return.

The short version

- **Friday late morning is your best hour of the week.** By a distance, and on a big enough sample to trust.
- **Weekday afternoons are the weak spot** and they are where most home service contractors send the most.
- **Sunday is not dead.** It is one of the strongest days we measured and gets the least attention.
- **You are sending in the wrong block.** Early afternoon takes 6,373 of our texts and returns 17.2%. Evening takes 1,464 and returns 29.2%, level with late morning. The evening sample is thin enough that we would test it before moving the whole schedule, but it is the clearest misallocation on the grid.
- **When they reply, they reply fast.** Median 3.5 minutes, and 65% inside a quarter of an hour. If you are not there to answer, the window closes.

BEFORE YOU USE ANY OF THIS

What this is, and what it isn't

This is our own book, not an industry study. 1,500 roofing leads, 17,350 text messages, 3,877 replies. One lead source, one trade, weighted to Florida. Your numbers will differ. The shapes probably won't.

It says home services on the cover and roofing in the sample. Here is why we think that is fair. Every lever we tested is a property of the message and the clock, not of the job: whether it carried an emoji, whether it led with an offer, how long it ran, whether it ended in a question, what hour it went out, and how many times we chased. A homeowner deciding whether to answer an unknown number is doing the same thing whether the text is about a roof or a furnace. That is a reasonable expectation, not a measured result. We have not run this book in HVAC or plumbing. Treat every number here as the hypothesis to test against your own CRM, and the direction as the thing worth acting on.

There are two reply rates in here and they are not the same measure. The clock counts replies landing in an hour against texts sent in that hour. It is a proxy, because a reply can arrive in a later hour than the text that caused it, and it needs a timezone

to place each text in the homeowner's own day, so it covers the 1,484 conversations of 1,500 whose number we could resolve (17,293 of the 17,350 texts). The message table in chapter three is stricter: a text counts as answered only if the homeowner replied before we sent again, across all 17,350 texts. Never read a number from one as if it came from the other.

Where the sample was thin we marked it rather than dressing it up. Every cell under 200 texts carries a °.

Phone calls are excluded. Those same leads also took 12,182 calls. Nothing in here says anything about what happens on the phone.

DO THIS WEEK

Five things worth changing

- 1** Ask about timing, wait for the obstacle, then put **a concrete time** back on the table.
- 2** Keep following up past the third. It is where your cost per response halves.
- 3** Delete the emoji and the word "free" from your templates.
- 4** Aim for 60 to 100 characters and end it with a question. Shorter than 60 does worse, not better.
- 5** Move volume to Friday morning and off Wednesday afternoon.
- 6** Try a week of evening sends. It is our joint-best block and our smallest.

**Want help getting more leads
and converting more of those**

leads into appointments?

That is the whole job. Book a time and we will look at your follow-up with you.

Book an appointment →

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